



JOHN ELWES, ESQ.^R



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THE
1490. T. 1.
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OF THE LATE

JOHN ELWES, Esq.

AS IT HAS APPEARED IN THE
NEWCASTLE ADVERTISER.

EVERY SINGULAR CHARACTER MERITS SOME NOTICE FROM
POSTERITY;—AND I HAVE ALWAYS SAID, THAT IF FATE PRO-
LONGED MY LIFE, I WOULD WRITE THIS.

SHAFTESBURY CHARACT.

NEWCASTLE:

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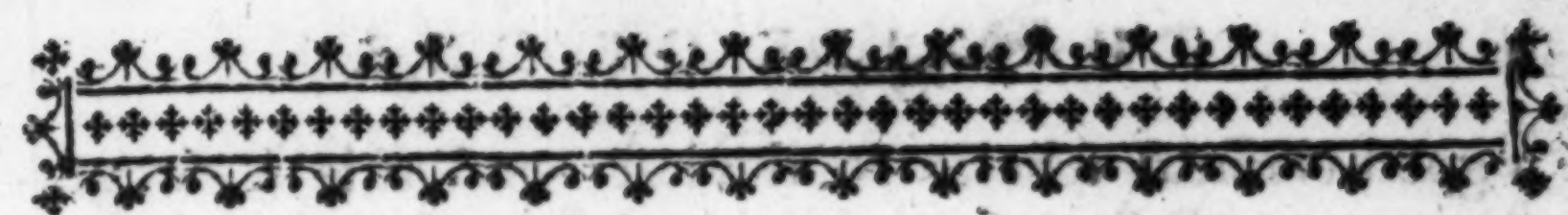
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O F T H E L A T E
JOHN ELWES, Esq.

THE family name of Mr Elwes was *Meggot* : and as his name was *John*, the conjunction of *Jack Meggot* made strangers sometimes imagine, that his intimates were addressing him by an assumed appellation. His father was a brewer of great eminence. He purchased, during his life, the estate now in possession of the family, at Marcham, in Berkshire, of the Calverts, who were in the same line. The father died while the late Mr Elwes was only four years old ; so little of the character of Mr Elwes is to be attributed to him ; but from his *mother* it may be traced at once—for, though she was left nearly *one hundred thousand pounds* by her husband—*she starved herself to death !*

The only children from the above marriage were Mr Elwes, and a daughter who married the father of the late Colonel Timms—and from thence came the intail of some part of the present estate.

At an early period of life he was sent to Westminster school, where he remained for ten or twelve years. During that time he had not misapplied his talents—for he was

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a good classical scholar to the last—and it is a circumstance not a little remarkable, though well authenticated, that he never read afterwards. Never was he seen at any period of his future life with a book, nor has he in all his different houses, now left behind him, books that would, were they collected together, *sell for two pounds*. His knowledge in accounts was still more trifling, and in some measure may account for the total ignorance he always was in, as to his own affairs.

The contemporaries of Mr Elwes, at Westminster, were Mr Worley, late Master of the Board of Works, and the present Lord Mansfield; who, at that time, had no objection to borrow all that young Elwes, even then, would lend.—His Lordship, however, has since changed his disposition, though Mr Elwes never altered his.

From Westminster school, Mr Elwes removed to Geneva, where he soon entered upon pursuits more agreeable to him than study. The Riding Master of the Academy there had then to boast, perhaps, three of the best riders in Europe, Mr Worley, Mr Elwes, and Sir Sydney Meadows. Of the three Elwes was reckoned the most desperate: the young horses were always put into his hands, and he was the *rough rider* to the other two.

During this period, he was introduced to Voltaire, whom he somewhat resembled in point of appearance; but though he has mentioned this circumstance, the genius, the fortune, the character of Voltaire, never seemed to strike him—they were out of his contemplation, and his way: the *horses* in the *riding school* he remembered much longer, and their respective qualities made a much deeper impression on him.

On his return to England, after an absence of two or three years, he was to be introduced to his uncle, the late Sir Harvey Elwes, who was then living at Stoke, in Suffolk,



folk, perhaps the most perfect picture of human penury that ever existed. The attempts at saving money were, in him, so extraordinary, that Mr Elwes, perhaps, never quite reached them, even at the last period of his life.

To Sir Harvey Elwes he was to be the heir, and of course it was requisite to please him. On this account it was necessary, even in old Mr Elwes, to masquerade a little; and as he was at that time in the world, and its affairs, he dressed like other people. This would not have done for Sir Harvey; so the nephew used to stop at a *little inn*, at Chelmsford, which he did not much like, and begin to *dress in character*;—a pair of small iron buckles, worsted stockings, darned, a worn-out old coat, and a tattered waistcoat, were put on, and onwards he rode to visit his uncle, who used to contemplate him with a *miserable kind* of satisfaction, and seemed pleased to find his heir attempting to come up with him in the race of avarice. There would they sit—*saving pair!*—with a single stick upon the fire, and with one glass of wine, occasionally, betwixt them, talking over the extravagance of the times; and when evening shut in, they would retire to rest—as “*going to bed saved candle-light.*”

But the nephew had then, what he had always, a very extraordinary appetite—and this would have been a monstrous offence in the eye of the uncle; so Mr Elwes was obliged to pick up a dinner first with some neighbour in the country, and then return to Sir Harvey with a little diminutive appetite that was quite engaging.

A partridge, a small pudding, and a potatoe, did the business! and the fire was suffered to go out, while Sir Harvey was at dinner, as eating was quite exercise enough.

But as Mr Elwes inherited from Sir Harvey a great part of the present fortune—somewhat of their histo-

ries become necessarily intermixed ; and, I trust, a small digression to give the picture of Sir Harvey, will not be thought unamusing or foreign to the subject:—He was, as may be imagined, a most singular character—and the way in which he lived was not less so. His seclusion from the world nearly reached that of a *Hermit* ; and could the extremity of his avarice have been taken out of the question, a more blameless life was never led.

Of this character a few singular circumstances shall be given :—and to men of modern times and more dissipated manners, used to hurry, and accustomed to continual variety——such a system of living as he pursued, will scarcely appear credible. But the picture is real and curious. It will serve to shew——“there is living out of London,”——and that a man may at length so effectually retire into himself—that there may remain little else but——*vegetation in a human shape.*

Providence, perhaps, has wisely ordered it, that the possessors of estates should change like the succession of seasons : the day of tillage and the seed time—the harvest and consumption of it—in due order, follow each other ; and in the scale of events, are all necessary alike.

This succession was exemplified in the character of Sir Harvey Elwes, who succeeded to Sir Jervaise, a very worthy gentleman, that had involved, as far as they would go, all the estates he received and left behind him. On his death, Sir Harvey found himself nominally possessed of *some thousands* a-year, but really with an income of *one hundred pounds* per annum. He said, on his arrival at Stoke, the family seat, “that never would he leave it, till he had entirely cleared the paternal estate,”—and he lived to do that, and to realize above *one hundred thousand pounds* in addition.

But he was formed of the very materials make perfect
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—*the character of a miser.* In his youth he had been given over for a consumption, so he had no constitution and no passions: He was timid, shy, and diffident in the extreme: of a thin, spare habit of body, and without a friend upon earth.

As he had no acquaintance, no books, and no turn for reading—the hoarding up, and the counting his money, was his greatest joy. The next to that, was—*partridge setting*, at which he was so great an adept, and game was then so plentiful—that he has been known to take 500 brace of birds in one season.—But he lived upon partridges—he and his whole *little household*—consisting of one man and two maids. What they could not eat, he turned out again, as he never gave away any thing.

During the partridge season, Sir Harvey and *his man* never missed a day, if the weather was tolerable—and his breed of dogs being remarkably good, he seldom failed in taking great quantities of game. At all times he wore a black velvet cap much over his face, a worn-out full-dressed suit of cloaths, and an old great coat, with worsted stockings drawn upon his knees. He rode a thin thoroughbred horse, and “*the Horse and his Rider*” both looked as if a gust of wind would have blown them away together.

When the day was not so fine as to tempt him abroad, he would walk backwards and forwards in his old Hall, to save the expence of fire.

If a farmer in his neighbourhood came in, he would strike a light in a tinder-box that he kept by him, and putting *one single stick* upon the grate, would not add another till the first was nearly burnt out.

As he had but little connection with London; he always had three or four thousand pounds at a time in his house. A set of fellows, who were afterwards known by the
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the appellation of the *Thacksted Gang*, and who were all hanged, formed a plan to rob him.—They were totally unsuspected at the time, as each had some apparent occupation during the day, and went out only at night, and when they had got intelligence of any great booty.

It was the custom of Sir Harvey, to go up into his bed-chamber at eight o'clock, where, after taking a basin of *water-gruel*, by the light of a small fire, he went to bed, to save the unnecessary extravagance of a candle.

The gang, who knew the hour when his servant went to the stable, leaving their horses in a small grove on the Essex side of the river, walked across, and hid themselves in the Church porch, till they saw the man come up to his horses. They then immediately fell upon him, and after some little struggle, bound and gagged him: They then ran up towards the house, tied the two maids together, and going up to Sir Harvey presented their pistols, and demanded his money.

At no part of his life, did Sir Harvey ever behave so well as in this transaction.—When they asked for his money, he would give them no answer till they had assured him, that his servant, who was a great favourite, was safe:—He then delivered them the key of a drawer in which was fifty guineas. But they knew too well he had much more in the house, and again threatened his life, without he discovered where it was deposited. At length he shewed them the place, and they turned out a large drawer where were *seven and twenty hundred guineas*. This they packed up in two large baskets, and actually carried off. *A robbery which, for quantity of specie, was perhaps never equalled.* On quitting him, they told him they should leave a man behind, who would murder him if he moved for assistance. On which he very coolly, and with some simplicity, took out his watch, which they had not asked for, and said, “Gentlemen, I do not want to take

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any of you, therefore, upon my honour, I will give you twenty minutes for your escape: after that time, nothing shall prevent me from seeing how my servant does."——He was as good as his word: When the time expired, he went and untied the man; but though some search was made by the village, the robbers were not discovered.

When they were taken up some years afterwards for other offences, and were known to be the men who robbed Sir Harvey, he would not appear against them.

Mr Harrington, of Clare, who was his lawyer, pressed him to go to Chelmsford, to identify their persons; but nothing could persuade him. "*No, no,*" said he, "*I have lost my money, and now you want me to lose my time also.*"

Of what temperance can do, Sir Harvey was an instance.—At an early period of life, he was given over for a consumption, and he lived till betwixt eighty and ninety years of age.

Amongst the few acquaintances he had, was an occasional club at his own village of Stoke—and there were members of it, *two Baronets* besides himself, Sir Cordwell Firebras, and Sir John Barnardiston. However rich they were, the reckoning was also an object of their investigation. As they were one day settling this difficult point, an odd fellow, who was a member, called out to a friend who was passing, "*For Heaven's sake, step up stairs and assist the poor! Here are three Baronets worth a million of money, quarelling about a farthing.*"

When Sir Harvey died, the only tear that dropped upon his grave, fell from the eye of his servant, who had long and faithfully attended him. To this servant he bequeathed a farm of 50l. per ann. "*to him and to his heirs.*"

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In the chastity and abstinence of his life, Sir Harvey Elwes was a rival of Sir Isaac Newton—for he would have held it unpardonable to have *given*—even his affections. And, as he saw no lady whatever, he had but little chance of bartering them, matrimonially, for money.

When he died, he lay in *state*, such as it was, at his seat at Stoke. Some of the tenants observed, with more humour than decency, that “it was well Sir Harvey could not see it.”

On his death, his fortune, which had now become immense, fell to his nephew, Mr Meggot, who, by will, was ordered to assume the name and arms of Elwes.

Thus lived, and thus died, the uncle to old Mr Elwes, whose possessions, at the time of his death, were supposed to be, at least, *two hundred and fifty thousand pounds*, and whose annual expenditure was about *one hundred and ten pounds*!

However incredible this may appear, it is yet strictly true; his cloaths cost him nothing, for he took them out of an old chest, where they had lain since the gay days of Sir Jervaise.

He kept his household chiefly upon game, and fish, which he had in his own ponds; and the cows, which grazed before his door, furnished milk, cheese, and butter, for the little economical household. What fuel he did burn, his woods supplied.

Those who have wished to find an excuse in the penury of Sir Harvey, have urged, that he had passed so long a period of his life alone, in recovering the estate, that he could not again encounter the world; and that his shyness was so extreme, that company gave him no pleasure.

To those who are continually courting the bustle of society, and the favour of public scenes, it may be curious to learn, that here was a man, *who had the courage to live nearly seventy years alone!*

That this was done without former scenes to afford matter for reflection, or books to entertain, but in pursuing one ruling passion--*the amassing unused wealth.*

To the whole of his property Mr Elwes succeeded; and it was imagined, that his own was not, at that time, very inferior. He got too an additional seat--but he got as it had been most religiously delivered down from his past.

The furniture was most sacredly antique; not a room was painted, nor a window repaired; the beds above stairs were all in canopy and state, where the worms and moths held their undisturbed reign; and the roof of the house was inimitable for the climate of Italy.

In short, the whole verified what was said--"That nobody would live with Sir Harvey Elwes, if they could--could they if they would."

The contemplation of such a character as that of Sir Harvey Elwes affords a very mortifying and melancholy view of human infirmity. The contrast of so much wealth, and so much abuse of it, is degrading to the human understanding. But in return, it yet has its uses. Let those who fancy there is a *charm in riches*, able to procure happiness, here view all their inability, and all their error; and acknowledge, that the *mind alone* "makes riches" our felicity. For who almost would credit, while the comforts, if not the luxuries of life, are supposed to confer happiness, and be the foundation of pleasures, who would credit that Sir Harvey Elwes, *possessed of Two Hundred and Fifty Thousand Pounds,* should

should live for above sixty years in solitude, to avoid the expence of company!—Should deny himself almost *fire* and *candle*!—Should wear the *cast-off cloaths* of his predecessor, and live in a house where the wind was entering at every broken casement, and the rain descending through the roof—voluntarily imposing on himself a condition little better than the *pauper* of an *alms-house*!

To *this uncle*, and *this property*, Mr Elwes succeeded when he had advanced beyond the fortieth year of age; and for fifteen years previous to this period, it was that he was known in the more fashionable circles of London. He had always a turn for play, and it was only late in life, and from paying always, and not always *being paid*, that he conceived disgust at the inclination.

The *acquaintances* which he had formed at Westminster School, and at Geneva, together with his own large fortune, all conspired to introduce him into whatever society he best liked. He was admitted a member of the Club at Arthur's, and various other Clubs of that period. And, as some proof of his notoriety at that time, a man of deep play—Mr Elwes, the late Lord Robert tie, and some others, are noticed in a scene in *The adventures of a Guinea*, for the frequency of their *midnight orgies*.

Few men, even from his own acknowledgment, played deeper than himself; and with success more various. I remember hearing him say, he had once played two days and a night without intermission; and the party being a small one, the party were nearly up to the eyes in cards. He lost some thousands at that sitting. The late Duke of Northumberland was of the party—never would quit a table where any hope of winning remained.

Had Mr Elwes received all he won, he would

been the richer by some thousands for the mode in which he passed this part of his life: but the vowels of I. O. U. were then in use, and the sums that were owed him, even by *very noble names*, were not liquidated. On this account he was a very great loser by play; and though he never could, or perhaps would ascertain the sum, I know from circumstances since, that it was very considerable. The theory which he professed—"that it was impossible to ask a gentleman for money" he perfectly confirmed by the practice; and he never violated this feeling to the latest hour of his life.

He contrived to mingle the small attempts at saving, with objects of the most unbounded dissipation. After sitting up a whole night at play for thousands, with the most fashionable and profligate men of the time, amidst splendid rooms, gilt sofas, wax lights, and waiters attendant on his call, he would walk out about four in the morning, not *towards home*, but into Smithfield, to meet his own cattle, which were coming to market from Thaydon-hall, a farm of his in Essex! There would this same man, forgetful of the scenes he had just left, stand in cold or rain bartering with a *carcase butcher for a shilling*! Sometimes, when the cattle did not arrive at the hour expected, he would walk on, in the mire, to meet them; and more than once has gone on foot the whole way to his farm without stopping, which was seventeen miles from London, after sitting up the whole night.

Had every man been of the mind of Mr Elwes, the *race* of Innkeepers must have perished, and *post chaises* have been returned back to those who made them; for it was the business of his life to avoid both. He always travelled on horseback—To see him setting out on a journey was a matter truly curious; his first care was to put two or three eggs, boiled hard, into his great coat pocket, or any scraps of bread which he found—Baggage he never took—Then, mounting one of his hunters, his next at-

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tention was to get out of London by that road where *turn-pikes* were the fewest. Then, stopping under any hedge, where grass presented itself for his horse, and a little water for himself, he would sit down and refresh himself and his horse together. Here presenting a new species of Bramin, worth *five hundred thousand pounds*.

The chief residence of Mr Elwes, at this period of his life, was in Berkshire, at his own seat at Marcham. Here it was he had two sons born, who inherit the greatest part of his property, by a will made about the year 1785. He failed not, however, at this time, to pay very frequent visits to Sir Harvey, his uncle, and used to attend him in his daily amusement of partridge setting.

On the death of his uncle, Mr Elwes then came to reside at Stoke, in Suffolk. Bad as was the mansion he found here, he left one still worse behind him at Marcham, of which the late Colonel Timms, his nephew, used to mention the following proof: a few days after he went thither, a great quantity of rain fell in the night—he had not been long in bed before he felt himself wet through; and putting his hand out of the clothes, found the rain was dropping through the ceiling upon the bed—he got up and moved the bed; but he had not lain long before he found the same inconvenience. Again he got up, and again the rain came down. At length, after pushing the bed quite round the room, he got into a corner where the ceiling was better secured, and he slept till morning. When he met his uncle, at breakfast, he told him what had happened—“Aye!—Aye!”—said the old man—“*I don't mind it myself; but to those who do, that's a nice corner in the rain!*”

On coming into Suffolk, it was—that Mr Elwes first began to keep fox-hounds; and his stable of hunters, at that time, was said to be the best in the kingdom. Of the

the breed of his horses he was sure, because he bred them himself; and, what never happens at present, they were not broken in till they were six years old.

The keeping fox-hounds was the only instance, in the whole life of Mr Elwes, of his ever sacrificing money to pleasure, and may be selected, as the only period when he forgot the cares, the perplexities, and the regret which his wealth occasioned. But, even here, every thing was done in the most frugal manner. Scrub, in the *Beaux Stratagem*, when compared with Mr Elwes's huntsman, had an idle life of it. This famous huntsman might have fixed an epoch in the *History of Servants*; for, in a morning, getting up at four o'clock, he milked the cows—he then prepared breakfast for Mr Elwes, or any friends he might have with him; then, slipping on a green coat, he hurried into the stable, saddled the horses, got the hounds out of the kennel, and away they went into the field. After the fatigues of hunting, he refreshed himself by rubbing down two or three horses as quickly as he could; then running into the house to lay the cloth, and wait at dinner; then hurrying again into the stable to feed the horses—diversified with an interlude of the cows again to milk, the dogs to feed, and eight hunters to litter down for the night. What may appear extraordinary, the man lived for some years, though his master used often to call him—“*An idle dog!*”—and say—“*He wanted to be paid for doing nothing!*”

It has been remarked, that Mr Elwes was one of the best gentlemen riders in the kingdom. Sir Sydney Meadows, who is *the law* upon this subject, always allowed it. His knowledge of horses was no way inferior—and, therefore, while he rode before the whole county of Suffolk, the horses he rode were the admiration of every body. As no bad proof of this, he had offered him for one of his hunters the sum of 300 guineas, and for another

ther 250—a sum in those days almost incredible—when a very good horse might be bought for fifteen pounds.

To modern sportsmen—accustomed to warm clothing and hot stables—his manner of treating them may appear singular. As soon as they were perfectly dry from hunting, if the weather was clear, he always turned them out for two or three hours—let the cold be ever so intense. Thus they walked off the stiffness occasioned by fatigue, and preserved their feet—and to this he attributed their being able to carry him when one of them was twenty-two years old.

To Mr Elwes, an *inn* upon the road, and an *apothecary's* bill, were equal subjects of aversion. The words “give” and “pay,” were not found in his vocabulary—and, therefore, when he once received a very dangerous kick from one of his horses, who fell in going over a leap, nothing could persuade him to have any assistance. He rode the chase through, with his leg cut to the bone; and it was only some days afterwards when it was feared an amputation would be necessary, that he consented to go up to London, and—hard day! part with some money for advice.

No *bounds* were more killing ones than those of Mr Elwes. The *wits* of the country used to say, “It must be so, or they would get nothing to eat.” In truth, it may be credited they lived but sparingly, though, scarcely will it be believed by the Meynells, the Cokes, and Pantons of the present day, that the whole fox-hunting establishment of Mr Elwes—*huntsman*, *dogs*, and *horses*, did not cost him three hundred pounds a year!

In the summer, they always passed their lives with the different tenants, where they had “more meat and less work;” and were collected together a few days before the season began.

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During this time, while he kept hounds, and which consumed a period of nearly 14 years, Mr Elwes almost totally resided at Stoke, in Suffolk. From thence he made frequent excursions to Newmarket—but he never engaged on the turf.

A kindness, however, which he performed there, should not pass away without remembrance.

Lord Abingdon, who was slightly known to Mr Elwes, in Berkshire, had made a match for seven thousand pounds—which it was supposed he would be obliged to forfeit, from an inability to produce the sum, though the odds were greatly in his favour. Unasked, unsolicited, Mr Elwes made him an offer of the money, which he accepted, and won his engagement. The generosity of this act no one will deny—but it was the fate of Mr Elwes to combine some great actions with a meanness so extraordinary, that he no longer appeared one and the same person.

The anecdote which accompanied it, I had not long ago from a clergyman, on whose authority I can place the most perfect reliance :

On the day when this match was to be run, he had agreed to accompany Mr Elwes to see the fate of it. They were to go, as was the custom of Mr Elwes, on horseback, and were to set out at seven in the morning.—Imagining they were to breakfast at Newmarket, the gentleman took no refreshment, and away they went.

They reached Newmarket about eleven, and Mr Elwes began to busy himself in enquiries and conversation, till twelve; when the match was decided in favour of Lord Abingdon.—He then thought they should move off to the town, to take some breakfast; but old Elwes still

continued riding about till three, and then four arrived; at which time the gentleman grew so impatient, that he mentioned something of the *keen air of Newmarket Heath*, and the comforts of a good dinner—"Very true," said old Elwes, "*Very true, so here, do as I do!*"—offering him at the same time, from his great-coat pocket, a piece of an *old crusted pancake*, which he said he had brought from his house at Marcham, two months before—but, "*that it was as good as new.*"

The sequel of the story was, that they did not reach home till nine in the evening; when the gentleman was so tired, that he gave up all refreshment but rest! and old Elwes, having hazarded *seven thousand pounds* in the morning, went happily to bed with the reflection—*he had saved three shillings!*—Such were the extraordinary contradictions of this *extraordinary man!* But not amongst strangers alone was money with him, the dearest object of his life. He had brought with him his two sons out of Berkshire, and certainly if he had liked any thing it was these boys—but no money would he lavish on their education; for he declared, that "putting things into people's heads, was the sure way to take money out of their pockets."

From this mean, and almost ludicrous, desire of saving, no circumstance of tenderness or affection—no sentiment of sorrow or compassion could turn him aside. The more diminutive the object seemed, his attention grew the greater; and it appeared as if Providence had formed him in a mould that was miraculous, purposely to exemplify that trite saying—"Penny wise and pound foolish."

That Mr Elwes was not troubled with too much natural affection, the following little anecdote will testify:—One day he had put his eldest boy upon a ladder to get some grapes for the table; when, by the ladder slipping,

he fell down and hurt his side against the end of it. The boy had the precaution to go up into the village to the barber and get blooded: on his return, he was asked where he had been, and what was the matter with his arm? He told his father that he had got bled—"Bled! bled!" said the old gentleman, "but what did you give?"—"A shilling," answered the boy:—"Psha!" returned the father, you are a blockhead; never part with your blood."

From the parsimonious manner in which Mr Elwes now lived—for he was fast following the footsteps of Sir Harvey, and from the two large fortunes of which he was in possession—riches now rolled in upon him like a torrent.—And had he been gifted with that clear and fertile head, which patient in accumulation, and fruitful in disposition, knows how to employ as well as to accumulate—which working from principal to interest—by compounding, forms a principal gain—and makes money generate itself,—had he possessed such a head as this, his wealth would have exceeded all bounds. But Nature, which sets limits to the ocean, forbade, perhaps, this monstrous inundation of property: and as Mr Elwes knew almost nothing of accounts, and never reduced his affairs to writing,—he was obliged, in the disposal of his money, to trust much to memory—to the suggestions of other people still more. Hence every person, who had a *want* or a *scheme* with an apparent high interest—adventurer or honest it signified not—all was prey to him, and he swam about like the *enormous Pike*, which, ever voracious and unsatisfied, catches at every thing, till it is itself caught!—Hence are to be reckoned visions of distant property in America—phantoms of annuities on lives that could never pay, and bureaus filled with bonds of *promising* Peers and Members, long *dismembered* of all property. I do not exaggerate when I say, I believe Mr Elwes lost in this manner, during his life, full one hundred and fifty thousand pounds! But perhaps in this ordination,

dination, Providence was all-wise. In the Life of Mr Elwes, the luxuriant sources of Industry or Enjoyment all stood still.

He encouraged no art; he bestowed not on any improvement; he diffused no blessings around him, and the distressed received nothing from his hand. What was got from him, was only obtained from his want of knowledge—by knowledge that was superior; and knaves and sharpers might have lived upon him, while poverty and honesty would have starved.

But not to the offers of *high interest* alone were his ears open. The making him trifling presents, or doing business for him for nothing, were little snug allurements, which in the hands of the needy always drew him on to a loan of money. A small wine-merchant, who had these views, begged his acceptance of some very *fine wine*, and in a short time obtained the loan of some hundred pounds.

Old Elwes used ever after to say, “*It was, indeed, very fine wine, for it cost him 20l. a bottle!*”

Thus was there a *reflex* of some of that wealth, which, he was gradually denying himself every comfort to amass. For, in the *penury* of Mr Elwes, there was something that seemed like a *judgment* from Heaven. All earthly comforts he voluntarily denied himself; he would walk home in the rain, in London, sooner than pay a shilling for a coach; he would sit in wet cloaths sooner than have a fire to dry them; he would eat his provisions in the last stage of putrefaction sooner than have a fresh joint from the butcher's; and he wore a wig for above a fortnight, which I saw him pick up out of a rut in a lane, where we were riding. This was the last extremity of laudable oeconomy: for, to all appearance, it was the *cast off wig* of some beggar!

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The day in which I first beheld him in this ornament, exceeded all power of face, for he had a torn brown coat, which he generally wore, and had been obliged to have recourse to the old chests of Sir Jervaise, from whence he had selected a full-dressed green velvet coat, with flash sleeves; and there he sat at dinner in boots, the aforesaid green velvet, his own white hair appearing round his face, and this black *stray wig* at the top of all. A Captain Roberts was with us at the time, and who had a great respect for Mr Elwes, was yet unable to sit at dinner for laughing.

When this inordinate passion for saving did not interfere, there are, upon record, some kind offices and very active service, undertaken by Mr Elwes. He would go far and long to serve those who applied to him; and give—however strange the word from him—would give himself great trouble to be of use. These instances are gratifying to select—it is plucking the sweet briar and the rose from the weeds that overspread the garden.

When Mr Elwes was at Marcham, two very ancient maiden ladies, in his neighbourhood, had, for some neglect, incurred the displeasure of the Spiritual Court, and were threatened with immediate "*Excommunication*."—The whole import of the word they did not perfectly understand, but they had heard something about standing in a church, and a penance, and their ideas immediately ran upon a *white sheet*.—They concluded, if they once got into that, it was all over with them, and as the excommunication was to take place next day, away they hurried to Mr Elwes, to know how they could make submission, and how the sentence might be prevented. No time was to be lost. Mr Elwes did that which, fairly speaking, not one man in five thousand would have done; he had his horse saddled, and putting, according to usual custom, a *couple of hard eggs* in his pocket, he set out for London that evening, and reached it early enough next morn-

morning, to notify the submission of the culprit damsels. Riding 60 miles in the night, to confer a favour on two antiquated virgins, to whom he had no particular obligation, was really, what not one man in five thousand would have done: but where personal fatigue would serve, Mr Elwes never spared it.

The ladies were so overjoyed—so thankful: “So much trouble and expence!—What returns could they make?”—To ease their consciences on this head, an old Irish gentleman, their neighbour, who knew Mr Elwes’s mode of travelling, wrote these words—“*My Dears, is it expence you are talking of? send him six-pence, and he gains two-pence by the journey.*”

The character of an impartial and upright Country Magistrate is the best character which the Country knows. What a Lawgiver is to a State, an intelligent Magistrate is, in a less degree, to the district where he resides. Such a Magistrate was Mr Elwes, while he resided in Berkshire, and it was almost totally owing to this best of recommendations, that an offer was made to him afterwards, of bringing him in as Representative for the county.

The prospect of a contested election, betwixt two most respectable families, in Berkshire, first suggested the idea of proposing a *third person*, who might be unobjectionable to both parties.—The person thus proposed was Mr Elwes; and the county were obliged to Lord Craven for the proposition.

It was at this period that Mr Elwes was passing, amongst his horses and his hounds, some rural occupations, and his country neighbours, the happiest hours of his life—hours which no future situation ever recalled—hours in which alone he stole from the perplexities which his wealth occasioned him afterwards; and where he forgot
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for a time, that strange *anxiety* and *continued irritation* about his money—and that, which I know not how better to denominate than by calling it the *insanity of saving*.

But as his wealth was accumulating fast, various were the people who were kind enough to make applications to *employ it for him*. Some, very obligingly, would trouble him with nothing more than their *simple bond*; others offered him a scheme of great advantage, with “a small *risque* and a certain profit,” which as certainly turned out the reverse; and others proposed “tracts of lands in America, and plans that were sure of success.” But, amidst these *kind offers*, the fruits of which Mr Elwes long felt and had to lament, some pecuniary accommodations were not bestowed amiss, and enabled the borrowers to pursue *Industry* into Fortune, and form a *settlement for life*. And, it is to be mentioned to the praise of Mr Elwes, that in all the various *loans* which he lent, in the course of a long life, not one usurious contract or improper advantage taken, *lives in the remembrance of any body*.

This, in the conduct of a man living only to amass money, is peculiar praise; and, while holding the pen of a faithful biographer, I am forced to recount circumstances I cannot commend; a most unpardonable omission should I esteem it, were I to omit the record of an action, that, in some measure, should shield this part of his character from reproach!—which claims a merit, because the reverse might have been expected; and proves that his avarice consisted not in *hard-heartedness*, but in self-denial.

Mr Elwes, from his father, Mr Meggot, had inherited some property, in houses, in London; particularly about the Haymarket, not far from which old Mr Elwes drew his first breath; for, by his register, it appears he was born in St James's parish. To this property he began now to add, by engagements with one of the Adams, about

about buildings, which he encreased from year to year to a very large extent. Great part of Marybone soon called him her founder. Portland-Place, and Portman-Square—the Riding-houses and Stables of the second troop of Life Guards—and buildings too numerous to name, all rose out of his *pocket*. And had not Lord North and his American war kindly put a stop to this rage of raising houses, much of the property he then possessed would have been laid out in bricks and mortar.

The extent of his property, in houses, soon grew great, that he became, from calculation, *his own insurer*; and he stood to all his own losses by conflagrations. He soon, therefore, became a *philosopher upon fire*; and I remember well, on a public-house, belonging to him being consumed, that he said, with great composure, “Well, well, there is no great harm done; the tenant never paid me, and I should not have got quit of him so quickly in any other way.”

In possessions so large, of course it would happen, that some of the houses were without a tenant—and, therefore, it was the custom of Mr Elwes, whenever he went to London, to occupy any of these premises which might happen to be vacant. He had thus a new way of seeing London and its inhabitants—for he travelled, in that manner, from street to street; and, whenever any body chose to take the house where he was, he was always ready to move into any other.

He was frequently an itinerant for a *night's lodging* and, though master of above a hundred houses, he never wished to rest his head long in any he chose to call his own. A *couple of beds*, a *couple of chairs*, a *table*, and an *old woman*, were all his furniture, and he moved them about at a minute's warning.

Of all these moveables the old *woman* was the only

that gave him trouble, for she was afflicted with a lameness that made it difficult to get her about quite so fast as he chose; and then, the colds she took were amazing, for sometimes she was in a small house in the Haymarket, at another in a great house in Portland Place; sometimes in a little room and a coal fire; at other times with a few chips, which the carpenters had left, in rooms of most splendid but frigid dimensions, and with a little *oiled paper* in the windows for glass.—In truth, she perfectly realized the words of the Psalmist—for, though the old woman might not be wicked, she certainly was, “Here to-day, and gone to-morrow.”

The scene which terminated the life of this *old woman*, is not the least singular among the anecdotes that are recorded of Mr Elwes. But it is too well authenticated to be doubted; I had the circumstance related to me by the late Colonel Timms himself.

Mr Elwes had come to town in his usual way—and taken up his abode in one of his houses that were empty. Colonel Timms, who wished much to see him, by some accident was informed that his uncle was in London, but then how to find him was the difficulty. He enquired at all the usual places where it was probable he might be heard of: He went to Mr Hoar's, the Banker, to the Mount Coffee-house, but no tidings were to be heard of him.

Not many days afterwards, however, he learnt from a person whom he met accidentally, that they had seen Mr Elwes going into an uninhabited house in Great Marlborough-street. This was some clue to Colonel Timms, and away he went thither. As the best mode of information, he got hold of a *chairman*—but no intelligence could he gain of a *gentleman* called Mr Elwes. Colonel Timms then described his person—but *no gentleman* had been seen.

A *pot-boy*, however, recollected that he had seen a poor old man opening the door of the stable, and locking it after him; and from every description it agreed with the person of old Mr Elwes. Of course, Colonel Timms went to the house; he knocked very loudly at the door—but none answered.—Some of the neighbours said they had seen such a man, but no answer could be obtained from the house.

On this added information, however, Colonel Timms resolved to have the stable door opened, and a blacksmith was sent for—and they entered the house together. In the lower parts of it—all was shut and silent. On ascending the stair-case, however, they heard the moans of a person seemingly in distress. They went to the chamber—and there, upon an old *pallet bed*—lay stretched out—seemingly in death—the *figure of old Mr Elwes*. For some time he seemed insensible that any body was near him—but on some cordials being administered by a neighbouring apothecary, who was sent for—he recovered enough to say—“That he had, he believed, been ill for two if not three days—and that there was an old woman in the house, but for some reason or other, she had not been near him. That she had been ill herself—but that she had got well, he supposed, and gone away.”

On repairing to the garrets—they found the *old woman* the companion of all his movements, and the partner of his journeys—stretched out lifeless on a rug upon the floor! To all appearance she had been dead about two days.

Thus died the servant—and thus would have died—but for the providential discovery of him by Col. Timms—old Mr Elwes, her master! And let politicians hold forth, after this, on the blessings of a “*land of plenty*.”—Let moralists reason on the proper uses of wealth—and here shall they view an existing example which shall baffle

baffle all their theory. A *mother*, in Mrs Meggot, who possessing *one hundred thousand pounds*—starved herself to death; and her son, who certainly was then worth *half a million*—nearly dying in his own house for *want*!

With all his penury, Mr Elwes was not a hard landlord, and his tenants lived easily under him. If they wanted any repairs, however, they were always at liberty to do it for themselves—for what may be stiled the *comforts of a house* were unknown to him. And what he allowed not to himself, it would scarcely be expected he would give to others.

Mr Elwes had now resided about thirteen years in Suffolk when the contest for Berkshire presented itself on the *dissolution of the parliament*; and when, to preserve the peace of that county, he was nominated by Lord Craven.

Mr Elwes, though he had retired from public business for some years, had still left about him some of the seeds of more active life—and he agreed to the proposal. It came farther enhanced to him, by the agreement that he was to be brought in by the freeholders for nothing: I believe all he did was dining at the ordinary, at Reading—and he got into Parliament for—*eighteen-pence*!

On being elected Member for Berkshire, he left Suffolk and went again to his seat at Marcham. His fox-hounds he carried along with him; but finding his time would, in all probability, be much employed, he resolved to relinquish his hounds: and they were shortly after given away to some farmers in that neighbourhood.

Though a *new man*, Mr Elwes could not be called a *young Member*, for he was at this time near sixty years old, when he thus entered on public life. But he was in possession of all his activity, and preparatory to his appearance on the boards of St Stephen's chapel, he used to at-

tend constantly, during the races and other public meetings, all the great towns where his voters resided. At the different assemblies he would dance among the youngest, to the last---after riding over on horseback, and frequently in the rain, to the place of meeting.

A gentleman who was one night standing by---observed on the extraordinary agility of so old a man, "O! *that is nothing,*" replied another, "*for Mr Elwes to do this, rode twenty miles in the rain---with his shoes stuck into his boots, and his bag-wig in his pocket.*"

At a period when men, in general, retire from public and fatiguing scenes, Mr Elwes resumed them: and became an unexperienced member of Parliament aged sixty. However opposite the whole of his life hitherto might have been to any thing that had the appearance of *vanity*, yet I have the testimony of many members of the House of Commons, to assure me, he was not a little vain of this situation. And the facility with which various Parliamentary Gentlemen persuaded him, for a time, to confer certain obligations on them, are some evidence that he once thought very highly of the *honour of Representation*.

In three successive Parliaments, Mr Elwes was chosen for Berkshire: and he sat as Member of the House of Commons about twelve years. It is to his honour---an honour in these times, indeed, most rare! that in every part of his conduct, and in every vote he gave, he proved himself to be what he truly was---an INDEPENDANT Country Gentleman. The character which Mr Elwes supported in Parliament, has been imitated but by few, and excelled by none. For wishing for no post, desirous of no rank, wanting no emolument, and being most perfectly conscientious, he stood aloof from all those temptations which have led many good men astray from the paths of honour. All that a Minister could have offered

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to Mr Elwes, would have been of no avail : for Posts or Dignities, would only have embarrassed him by taking him away from the privacy *he loved*. As an instance of this he was unhappy for some days, on hearing that Lord North intended to apply to the King to make him a Peer. I really believe, had such an honour fallen unexpectedly upon his head, it would have been the death of him. He never would have survived—they being obliged to keep a carriage, and three or four servants—all, perhaps, better dressed than himself !

For through every period of his life, it was a prevalent feature in his character *to be thought poor* ; that he could not afford to live as other people did ; and that the reports of his being rich were entirely erroneous.

To these ideas he thought he gave strength, by having no servants, nor any of the “ outward and visible signs” of wealth ; and he had persuaded himself, that the public would really think he had *no money*, because he made no use of any.

Mr Elwes was first chosen to represent the county of Berks, in the year 1774—and he was brought in, in the way he best liked—at no expence. His brother member was Christopher Griffith, Esq; who died in the year 1778, and he was succeeded by Winchcombe Henry Hartley, Esq; who was re-elected with Mr Elwes, at the general election in the year 1780.

The honour of Parliament made no alteration in the dress of Mr Elwes ; on the contrary, it seemed, at this time, to have attained additional meanness—and nearly to have reached that happy climax of poverty, which has, more than once, drawn on him the compassion of those who passed by him in the street.

For the Speaker's dinners, however, he had one suit—
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with which the Speaker, in the course of the session, became very familiar. The Minister, likewise, was well acquainted with it--and at any dinner of opposition, still was his apparel the same. The wits of the minority used to say, "that they had full as much reason as the Minister to be satisfied with Mr Elwes--as he had the *same habit* with every body."

The debates at this period were very long and interesting, and generally continued till a late hour in the morning, Mr Elwes, who never left any company, public or private, the first, always stayed out the whole debate.—After the division, Mr Elwes, without a great-coat, would immediately go out of the House of Commons into the cold air, and, merely to save the expence of a hackney-coach, walk to the *Mount Coffee-house*.

Sir Joseph Mawbey, and Mr Wood of Lyttleton, who went the same way as Mr Elwes did, often proposed a hackney-coach to him, but the reply always was, "He liked nothing so much as walking." However, when *their* hackney-coach used to overtake him, he had no objection to coming in to them, knowing that they must pay the fare. This circumstance happened so often, that they used to smile at this act of small cunning, and indulge him in it.

But as the satisfaction of being conveyed home for nothing did not always happen, on those nights when it did not, Mr Elwes invariably continued his plan of walking. A circumstance happened to him on one of these evenings, which gave him a whimsical opportunity of displaying that disregard of his own person, which I have before noticed.

The night was very dark, and hurrying along, he went with such violence against the pole of a *Sedan chair*, which he did not see, that he cut both his legs very deeply. As usual,

usual, he thought not of any assistance; but Col. Timms, at whose house he then was, in Orchard-street, insisted upon some one being sent for. Old Elwes at length submitted, and an apothecary was called in, who immediately began to expatiate on “the bad consequences of breaking the skin—the good fortune of his being sent for—and the peculiar bad appearance of Elwes’s wound.”

“Very probable,” said old Elwes, “but Mr ———, I have one thing to say to you—in my opinion my legs are not much hurt; now you think they are—so I will make this agreement; I will take one *leg*, and you shall take the *other*; you shall do what you please with your’s, and I will do nothing to mine; and I will wager your bill that *my leg* gets well the first.”

I have frequently heard him mention, with great triumph, that he beat the apothecary by a fortnight!

All this time the income of Mr Elwes was increasing hourly, and his present expenditure was next to nothing; for the little pleasures he had once engaged in, he had now given up. He kept no house, and only one old servant and a couple of horses; he resided with his nephew; his two sons he had stationed in Suffolk and Berkshire, to look after his rents and estates; and his dress certainly was no expence to him; that had not other people been more careful than himself, he would not have had it even mended.

When he left London he went on horseback to his country-seats, with his couple of *hard eggs*, and without once stopping upon the road at any house. He always took the most unfrequented road—but Marcham was the feat he now chiefly visited; which had some reason to be flattered by the preference, as his *journey* into Suffolk cost him only *two-pence-halfpenny*, while that into Berkshire amounted to *four-pence*!

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When Mr Elwes thought he had got into the House of Commons for nothing, he had not taken into the account the *inside* of the House—the *outside* only had entered into his calculation. In a short time, therefore, he found out, that members of Parliament could want money, and he had the misfortune to know *one member* who was inclined to lend them. Perhaps a fate ordained this retribution, and designed that *thus only*, some of the enormous wealth of Mr Elwes should escape from his grasp. Be this as it may, there does however exist a *pile of bad debts* and *uncancelled bonds*, which, could they be laid on the table of the House of Commons, would strike dumb some orators on both sides of the House.

In the survey of these *monied memorials* it would seem, as if some members had thought they were only franking a letter, or considered these bonds as a cover to go free.

Time, which conquers all things, conquered this passion of lending in Mr Elwes, and an unfortunate proposal which was made to him, of vesting *twenty-five thousand pounds* in some *iron-works* in America, gave, at last, a fatal blow to his various speculations. The plan had been so plausibly laid before him, that he had not a doubt of its success; but he had the disappointment never to hear more either of his *iron* or his *gold*.

From this period, he began to think that the funds were fully as safe as *iron works* or Members of Parliament, and from that time he vested his money in those securities.

I have heard him say, that three contested elections would not have cost him more than he lost by his *brother representatives*. In the year 1780, another member threatened him with a calamity not less likely to be afflictive. His neighbour, at that time, in Welbeck-street, Lord George Gordon, gave him a prospect of diminishing his income upon houses—and as Mr Elwes was *his own*

own insurer, he passed his time very pleasantly during the fires. On a house, adjoining to that where Mr Elwes lived, being set on fire, Lord George Gordon offered, very civilly, to take the furniture of Mr Elwes into his own house, by way of securing it. But Mr Elwes fully as civilly replied, "He was much obliged to his Lordship, but if he would give him leave, he would take his chance!"

On the dismissal of Lord North, Mr Elwes was left in the party of Mr Fox—though he could not properly be said to belong to any set of men, for he had the very singular quality of not determining how he should vote, before he heard what was said on the subject. On this account he was not reckoned an acquisition by either side; and, it is but justice to say, he was perfectly indifferent to the opinions of both.

When the Marquis of Lansdowne came into power, Mr Elwes was found supporting, for a time, his administration—and his Lordship will understand me when I say—Mr Elwes had his reasons to be satisfied with the peace; *for he saw, what he might not otherwise have seen.*

Not long after this, Mr Elwes followed his conscience upon a question, and voted with Mr Fox, against the Marquis of Lansdowne, and thus added another confirmation to the political opinion that was held of him—"That no man, or party of men, could be sure of him."

This was frequently the declaration of Sir Edward Aftley, Sir George Saville, Mr Powis, and Mr Marsham, who all, and frequently, talked to him on his whimsical versatility.—But it will, undoubtedly, admit a question, even in politics, how far a man, thus voting on all sides, as his opinion led him at the moment, be or be not a desirable man, in aiding *the good government of a country?*

The *model* which Mr Elwes left to future members, may,

may, perhaps, be looked on rather as a work to wonder at, than to follow. The constituent becoming corrupt, renders the representative so of course. Where people will sell, buyers only can have goods, and the people will have themselves only to blame, when what is bought is again sold.

Mr Elwes came into Parliament *without expence*, and he performed his duty as a member would have done in the pure days of our constitution. What he had not bought he never attempted to sell—and he went forward in that straight and direct path, which can alone satisfy a reflecting mind.

In one word, Mr Elwes as a public man, voted and acted in the House of Commons as a man would do, who felt there were people to live after him; who wished to deliver unmortgaged to his children, the public estate of government, and who felt, that if he suffered himself to become a pensioner on it, he thus far embarrassed his posterity, and injured the inheritance.

When Mr Elwes retired from Parliament, no man ever retired from the House of Commons, leaving it more loaded with obligations than he did; and they were obligations that were never cancelled. If I might judge from the multitude of bonds I have seen, I should be led to think some Members imagined he was a great money lender, appointed by Government to come down to the House of Commons and “oblige the Gentlemen” who might be in want of his aid.

When application was afterwards made for the payment of them—on moving that question, Mr Elwes stood as single as did the respected Mr Strutt, Member for Malden, on the subject of Admiral Keppel.—Not a member said “Aye!” and Mr Elwes died possessed of proofs
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most undeniable, that, somehow or other, *every man must pay for coming into Parliament.*

In these speculations, upon lending money, Mr Elwes was, at one time, most unbounded; but the temptation of one *per cent.* more than the funds, or landed property, would give, was irresistible. But amongst the sums he thus vested in other people's hands, some stray, forlorn, instances of feeling may be remembered; of which the following is an instance:—When his son was in the Guards, he was frequently in the habit of dining at the officers' table there. The politeness of his manners rendered him agreeable to every one, and in time, he became acquainted with every officer in the corps; amongst the rest, with a gentleman of the name of Tempest, whose good humour was almost proverbial. A vacancy happening in a Majority, it fell to this gentleman to purchase: but as money is not always to be got upon landed property immediately, it was imagined some officer would have been obliged to purchase over his head. Old Mr Elwes heard of the circumstance, and sent him the money next morning. He asked no security—he had seen Captain Tempest and liked his manners; and he never afterwards talked to him about the payment of it. On the death of Captain Tempest, which happened shortly after, the money was replaced. That Mr Elwes was no loser by the event, does not take away from the merit of the deed. And it stands amongst those singular records of his character, that reason has to reconcile, or philosophy to account for, that the same man, at one and the same moment, could be prodigal of thousands, and yet almost deny to himself the necessaries of life!

An anecdote, exemplifying the truth of this, I will add at this moment. It comes to me on the very respected authority of Mr Spurling, of Dynes Hall, a very active and intelligent Magistrate, for the county of Essex. It seems Mr Elwes had requested Mr Spurling, to accompan

pany him to Newmarket. It was a day in one of the Spring Meetings, which was remarkably filled with races; and they were out from six in the morning till eight o'clock in the evening, before they again set out for home. Mr Elwes, in the usual way, would eat nothing; but Mr Spurling was somewhat wiser, and went down to Newmarket. When they began their journey home, the evening was grown very dark and cold, and Mr Spurling rode on somewhat quicker; and on going through the turnpike, by the Devil's Ditch, he heard Mr Elwes calling to him with great eagerness. On returning before he had paid, Mr Elwes said—"Here!—here!—follow me!—This is the best road!"—In an instant he saw Mr Elwes, as well as the night would permit, climbing his horse up the precipice of the ditch. "Sir," said Mr Spurling, "I never can get up there."—"No danger at all!"—replied Mr Elwes; "but if your horse be not safe, lead him!"—In length, with great difficulty, and with one of the horses falling, they mounted the ditch, and then with not less toil, got down on the other side. When they were safely landed on the plain, Mr Spurling thanked Heaven for their escape.—"Aye," said old Mr Elwes, "you must have done from the turnpike?—very right; never pay a turnpike if you can avoid it!" In proceeding on their journey, they came to a very narrow road; at which Mr Elwes, notwithstanding the cold, went as slowly as possible. On Mr Spurling, wishing to quicken their pace, old Elwes observed that he was letting his horse feed on some hay that was hanging on the side of the hedge—"Besides," added he, "it is nice hay, and you have it for nothing."

These pleasant acts of endangering his neck to save the payment of a turnpike, and starving himself for a halfpenny worth of hay, happened, from the date of them, at the time he was risking the sum of twenty-five thousand pounds on some iron-works, across the Atlantic Ocean, and of which he knew nothing, either as to produce, prospect, or situation!

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Strange man!—whose penury and prodigality, whose profusion and meanness, all so mixed together, puzzle me still more and more, as I detail them to the public.

When Mr Elwes quitted Parliament, he was, in the common phrase, “A fish out of water!” Indeed, there is no trial more arduous, than that of acquiring, at an advanced age, new modes of life. To form new societies, and conciliate new friends, new spirits, alas! are wanting. The style of Mr Elwes’s life had left no domestic scenes to which he could retire—his home was dreary and poor—his rooms received no cheerfulness from fire; and while the outside had all the appearance of a “House to let,” the inside was a desert. But he had his penury alone to thank for this, and for the want of all the little consolations which should attend old age, and smooth the passage of declining life.

When he retired from Parliament, Mr Elwes, as I apprehend, was nearly seventy-five years of age, and the expenditure of a few hundred pounds would certainly have continued him in the situation he loved, where he was respected, and had due honour; where he was amongst his friends, and where long habit had made every thing congenial to him.—All this he gave up to his love of money. That passion, which consuming all before it, as it hurried him along the few remaining years of his life, at length carried him to his grave, twenty years sooner than the muscular vigour of his body might have reason to expect. For when Dr Wall, his late physician, was called in, viewed him extended on that squallid bed of poverty, from which he would not be relieved—he said to one of his sons, “Sir, your father might have lived these twenty years; but the irritations of his temper have made it impossible to hope for any thing: the body is yet strong, but the mind is gone entirely!”

The scenes that now wait upon my hand, for the few
D years

years before his death, will exhibit a story of *penurious denial* that never have fallen to my share to find a parallel. In the wonder which they have yet left upon my mind, I can only say, "*they are true.*"

Mr Elwes had, for some years, been a member of a *Card Club*, at the Mount Coffee-house, and, by a constant attendance on this meeting, he, for a time, consoled himself for the loss of Parliament. The play was moderate, and he had an opportunity of meeting many of his old acquaintances in the House of Commons, and he experienced a pleasure, which, however trivial it may appear, was not less satisfactory, that of enjoying *fire and candle at a general expence.*

For however rejectful Mr Elwes appeared of "the good things of this life," when they were to come out of his own pocket—he by no means acted in the same manner when those same things were at the expence of any other person.—He had an admirable taste in *French dishes*, at the table of another.—No man had more judgment in *French wines*, when they did not come from his own wine merchant—and "he was very nice in his appetite," on the day he dined from home.

Much, therefore, of his time Mr Elwes passed in the Mount Coffee-house. But fortune seemed resolved, on some occasions, to disappoint his hopes, and to *force away* that money from him, which no power could persuade him to bestow.—He still retained some fondness for play, and imagined he had no small skill at *picquet*. It was his ill-luck, however, to meet with a gentleman who thought the same, and on much better grounds, for, after a contest of two days and a night, in which Mr Elwes continued with a perseverance which avarice will inspire, he rose a loser of a sum which he always endeavoured to conceal—though I have some reason to think it was not less than *three thousand pounds*. Some part of it was paid

by a large draft on Mess. Hoares, and was received very early the next morning. This was the last folly, of the kind, of which Mr Elwes was ever guilty; and it is but justice to the Members of the Club, to say, that they ever after endeavoured to discourage any wish to play with him. Thus, while by every art of human mortification, he was saving shillings and six-pences, he would kick down, in one moment, the heap he had raised. Though yet was the benefit of this consideration all thrown away upon him, for his maxim always was—and it was agreeable, that he has repeated it to me, at least, a hundred times—“*That all great fortunes were made by saving: for of that a man could be sure.*”

The rooms, at his seat at Stoke, that were now much out of repair, and would have all fallen in, but for his son, John Elwes, Esq; who had resided there, he thought too expensively furnished, as *worse things* might have done. If a window was broken, there was to be no repair but that of a little *brown paper*, or that of *piecing in* a bit of *broken glass*, which had at length been done so frequently, and in so many shapes, that it would have puzzled a mathematician to say, “*what figure they described.*”

To save fire, he would walk about the remains of an old green house, or sit, with a servant, in the kitchen. During the harvest, he would amuse himself with going into the fields to glean the corn, on the ground of his own tenants; and they used to leave a little more than common, to please the old gentleman, who was as eager after it, as any pauper in the parish.

In the advance of the season, his morning employment was to pick up any stray chips, bones, or other things, to carry to the fire, in his pocket—and he was one day surprised by a neighbouring gentleman, in the act of pulling down, with some difficulty, a *crow's nest*, for this purpose. On the gentleman's wondering why he gave himself the

trouble—"O Sir, replied old Elwes, it is really a shame that these creatures should do so. Do but see what waste they make! They don't care how extravagant they are!"

As no gleam of favourite passion or any ray of amusement broke through this gloom of penury, his insatiable desire of saving was now become uniform and systematic. He used still to ride about the country on one of his mares—but then he rode her very economically, on the soft turf adjoining the road, without putting himself to the expence of shoes—as he observed, "the turf was so pleasant to a horse's foot:" And when any gentleman called to pay him a visit, and the boy who attended in the stables was profuse enough to put a little hay before his horse, old Elwes would sily steal back into the stables, and take the hay very carefully away.

That very *strong appetite* which Mr Elwes had in some measure restrained during the long sitting of Parliament, he now indulged most voraciously, and on every thing he could find. To save, as he thought, the expence of going to a butcher, he would have a whole sheep killed, and so eat mutton to the—*end of the chapter*. When he occasionally had his river drawn, though sometimes horse-loads of small fish were taken, not one would he suffer to be thrown in again, for he observed, "*He should never see them again!*" Game in the last state of putrefaction—and meat that *walked about his plate*—would he continue to eat, rather than have new things killed before the old provisions were finished.

With this diet—the *charnel house of sustenance*—his dress kept pace—equally in the last stage of *absolute dissolution*. Sometimes he would walk about in a tattered brown-coloured hat; and sometimes in a red and white woollen cap, like a prisoner confined for debt.

When

When any friends, who might be with him, were absent, he would carefully put out his own fire, and walk to the house of a neighbour, and thus make one fire serve both. In short, whatever Cervantes or Moliere have pictured, in their most sportive moods, of Avarice in the extreme, here might they have seen realized or surpassed!

The summer of 1788, Mr Elwes passed at his house in Welbeck-street, London, and he passed that summer without any other society than that of two maid-servants, for he had now given up the expence of keeping any male domestic. His chief employment used to be that of getting up early in a morning to visit some of his houses in Mary-le-bone, which during the summer were repairing.

As he was there generally at four o'clock in a morning, he was of course on the spot before the workmen—and he used contentedly to sit down on the steps before the door, to scold them when they did come. The neighbours who used to see him appear thus regularly every morning, and who concluded, from his apparel, he was one of the workmen, observed, “there never was so punctual a man as the *old carpenter*.”

During the whole morning, he would continue to run up and down stairs, to see the men were not idle for an instant, with the same anxiety as if his whole happiness in life had been centered in the finishing this house—Regardless of the greater property he had at stake in various places, and for ever employed in the minutiae of affairs. Indeed such was his anxiety about this house—the rent of which was not above 50l. a year—that it brought on a fever which nearly cost him his life. But the fate which dragged him on thus strangely, to bury him under the load of his own wealth, seemed as resistless as it was accountable.

In the muscular and unencumbered frame of Mr Elwes,
D 3 there

there was every thing that promised extreme length of life, and he lived to above 70 years of age, without any *natural disorder* attacking him. But as Lord Bacon has well observed, "The minds of some men are a lamp that is burning continually," and such was the mind of Mr Elwes.—Removed from those occasional public avocations which had once engaged his attention, *money* was now his only thought.

He rose upon *money*—upon *money* he lay down to rest; and as his capacity sunk away from him by degrees, he dwindled from the real cares of his property, into the puerile concealment of a few guineas. This little store he would carefully wrap up in various papers, and depositing them in different corners, would amuse himself with running from one to the other, to see whether they were all safe; then forgetting, perhaps, where he had concealed some of them, he would become so seriously afflicted as a man might be who had lost all his property. Nor was the day alone thus spent—he would frequently rise in the middle of the night, and be heard walking about different parts of the house, looking after what he had thus hidden and forgotten.

Rest, thou perturbed spirit, rest!

Is an apostrophe that *here* would have met real cause for its address—not in the wild fancy of the bard, bodying forth ideal forms and phantoms of the brain, but in the settled thirst after one object, for ever preying upon the mind, and getting strange mastership over it; then, as memory wore away, and reason became weaker and weaker still, exhibiting a wondrous picture of *avarice* rising over the ruins of the understanding; the mind all laid waste before it, and the body at length falling a sacrifice to feverish imagination. Preposterous passion! that "seemed to grow by what it fed on," still more unfated when desire could have no room for want, and when the powers of enjoyment were all closed!

It was at this period, and at 76 years old, or upwards, that Mr Elwes began to feel, for the first time, some bodily infirmities from old age. He now experienced occasional attacks from the gout; on which, with his usual perseverance, and with all accustomed antipathy to apothecaries, and their bills, he would set out to walk as far and as fast as he could.—While he was engaged in this painful mode of cure, he frequently lost himself in the streets, the names of which he no longer remembered, and was as frequently brought home by some errand-boy, or stranger, of whom he had enquired his way.—On these occasions he would bow and thank them, at the door, with great civility; but he never indulged them with a sight of the inside of the house.

During the winter of 1789, the last winter Mr Elwes was fated to see, his memory visibly weakened every day; and from the unceasing wish to save money, he now began to apprehend he should die in want of it. Mr Gibson had been appointed his builder, in the room of Mr Adam; and one day, when this gentleman waited upon him, he said, with apparent concern, “Sir, pray consider
“ in what a wretched state I am; you see in what a good
“ house I am living—and here are five guineas, which
“ is all I have at present; and how I shall go on with
“ such a sum of money puzzles me to death.—I dare
“ say you thought I was rich; now you see how it is!”

The close of Mr Elwes's life was still reserved for one singularity more, and which will not be held less singular than all that has passed before it, when his disposition and his advanced age are considered. He gave away his affections: he conceived *the tender passion*.—In plain terms, having been accustomed for some time to pass his hours, out of oeconomy, with the two maid servants in the kitchen—one of them had the art to induce him to fall in love with her, and it is matter of doubt, had

had it not been discovered, whether she would not have had the power over him to have made him-marry her.

Had Mr Elwes, at nearly *eighty years of age*, and with property amounting to almost a million of money—thus closed his extraordinary life by a *marriage in the kitchen*, it would indeed have added one feature more to that singular Memoir, which the Life of this Gentleman has presented to the public! and which, since the beginning of time, certainly never had a parallel!

But good fortune, and the attention of his friends, saved him from this last act—in which, perhaps, the pitiable infirmity of nature, weakened and worn down by age and perpetual anxiety, is in some measure to be called to account. At those moments, when the cares of money left him somewhat of ease, he had no domestic scenes of happiness to which he could fly—and therefore felt with more sensibility, any act of kindness that might come from any quarter: and thus, when his sons were absent, having no one near him whom *principle* made assiduous—those who might be *interested*, too frequently gained his attention.



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M R E L W E S.

IT was now the autumn of the year 1789, and the progress of each day took something away from his understanding. His memory was gone entirely; his perception of things was decreasing very rapidly, and as the mind became unsettled, gusts of the most violent passion usurped the place of his former command of temper. That courtsey once so amiable in his manners and his address, was now conspicuous no longer: and there appeared no particle of his mental qualities that did not seem to have survived themselves.

For six weeks previous to his death, he had got a custom of going to rest in his cloaths, as perfectly dressed as during the day. He was one morning found fast asleep betwixt the sheets, with his shoes on his feet, his stick in his hand, and an old torn hat upon his head.

On this circumstance being discovered, a servant was set to watch, and take care that he undressed himself: yet, so desirous was he of continuing this custom, that he told the servant, with his usual providence about money, that if he would not take any notice of him, he would leave him something in his Will.

On

On the 18th day of November, 1789, Mr ELWES discovered signs of that utter and total weakness, which, in eight days, carried him to his grave. On the evening of the first day he was conveyed to bed—from which he rose no more. His appetite was gone—he had but a faint recollection of any thing about him; and his last coherent words were addressed to his son, Mr JOHN ELWES, in hoping “he had left him what he wished.” On the Morning of the 26th of November, he expired without a sigh!—with the ease with which an infant goes to sleep on the breast of its mother, worn out with the “Rattles and the Toys” of a long day!

One strange circumstance I cannot here omit to mention:—Some days previous to the death of the father, Mr JOHN ELWES was returning from an estate he had just purchased, in Gloucestershire, with a Clergyman, to whom he had given the living. On his journey a strange *presentiment* came across his mind, that he should see his father but once again. The idea was so strongly impressed upon his thoughts, that he set out in the middle of the night to reach Marcham: he did reach it, and was in time to be witness to that sight which most afflicts a good son, on the subject of a father—he beheld him expire.

Thus died Mr ELWES, fortunate in escaping from a World he had lived in too long for his own peace!



F. B. N. I. S.